

Message Text

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ACTION OC-05

INFO OCT-01 CCO-00 ISO-00 (ISO) W

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R 281206Z JAN 76

FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6046

UNCLAS DAMASCUS 491

DEPT FOR A/COM FENSTERMACHER FROM MCCORMICK

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ACOM, SY

SUBJ: UNACCOMPANIED POUCHES FOR DAMASCUS

REF: 75 STATE 265755, 75 DAMASCUS 5222, STATE 1712

1. RECENT AIRPOUCHES RECEIVED FROM DEPARTMENT HAVE NOT
CONTAINED USUAL AMOUNT PACKAGES AND OTHER BULK MAIL FOR
EMBASSY STAFF. WE ARE CONCERNED THAT PERHAPS
WITHOUT NOTIFYING US DEPARTMENT MAY HAVE
DISCONTINUED AIR LIFT PROGRAM SPECIFIED REFTEL A.

2. REFTEL B REFERS TO FIRST SHIPMENT OF SEA
POUCHES SHIPPED TO DAMASCUS VIA SYRIAN
PORTS AND INVOLVES 15 POUCHES DISPATCHED
NOVEMBER 26 ABOARD LASH PACIFICO TO LATTAKIA.

3. WE HAVE SUBSEQUENTLY BEEN ADVISED OF 3 MORE
SHIPMENTS OF SEA POUCHES TO LATTAKIA:

3. WE HAVE SUBSEQUENTLY BEEN ADVISED OF 3 MORE
SHIPMENTS OF SEA POUCHES TO LATTAKIA:

A - 12 POUCHES DISPATCHED DECMEBER 12 ABOARD LASH ATLANTICO.

B - 4 POUCHES DISPATCHED ON DEMBER 29
ABOARD LASH TURKIYE.

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C - 3 POUCHES DISPATCHED JANUARY 5

ABOARD LASH PACIFICO.

4. IN ATTEMPT TO ARRANGE CLEARANCE FOR THESE
4 SHIPMENTS, ADMINISTRATIVE COUNSELOR
MCCORMICK CALLED ON PTT AND CUSTOMS OFFICIALS
IN PORTS OF TARTOUS AND LATTAKIA LAST
WEEK. HE DISCOVERED THAT SARG PTT OFFICIALS
ARE COMPLETELY IGNORANT ON HANDLING INTERNATIONAL
SEA MAIL AND ESPECIALLY DIPLOMATIC SEA POUCHES.
SINCE THIS TYPE OF CARGO PREVIOUSLY CAME THRU BEIRUT.
PTT OFFICIALS OF BOTH PORTS SAID THAT
THEY WILL DO THEIR BEST TO EXPEDITE SHIPPING
SEA POUCHES TO PTT DAMASCUS FOR DELIVERY TO
EMBASSY. HOWEVER, WE HAVE STILL NOT RECEIVED
ANY OF THE POUCHES AS OF THIS DATE.

5. PORTS OF BOTH TARTOUS AND LATTAKIA ARE
EXTREMELY CONGESTED AT PRESENT TIME (BACK LOG
OF 100 SHIPS AT LATTAKIA AND 75 SHIPS AT TARTOUS)
AND NO IMPROVEMENT IS EXPECTED FOR SOME MONTHS
TO COME. PORT OF LATTAKIA HAS NO FACILITIES
TO HANDLE (LIGHTERS) CARRIED BY PRUDENTIAL
LINES LASH SHIPS AND AUTHORITIES IN LATTAKIA
HAVE INSTRUCTED SHIPS CAPTAINS TO OFF LOAD AT
TARTOUS WHICH HAS FACILITIES TO HANDLE ONE
OR TWO LIGHTERS BUT NO CRANE EQUIPMENT FOR
UNLOADING. PRUDENTIAL LINES AGENT IN LATTAKIA
HAS BEEN FORCED TO HIRE PORTABLE CRANE TO
OFF-LOAD LIGHTERS BUT SCARCITY OF CRANES AND
WINTER WEATHER WHICH PREVENT WORKING ON THE
LIGHTERS DURING FREQUENT RAINS CREATE SERIOUS
PROBLEMS FOR OFF-LOADING CARGO.

PRUDENTIAL LINES AGENT INDICATED TO MCCORMICK
THAT HE WAS GOING TO RECOMMEND THAT LASH SHIPS
NOT CALL AT LATTAKIA NOR TARTOUS UNTIL PORTS
CAN PROVIDE ADEQUATE FACILITIES FOR HANDLING
LIGHTERS.

6. CONGESTION AT LATTAKIA HAS ALREADY RESULTED IN
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OVERLANDING ONE EMBASSY SHIPMENT AT ISTANBUL AND
THE MISPLACEMENT OF THREE VANS OF HHE IS THAT THE
TURKISH CARGO LINES AGENT CANNOT DETERMINE ARE LOST
IN PORT AREA OR HAVE BEEN SHORTLANDED OR LONGLANDED
ELSEWHERE.

IF ITEMS AS LARGE AS LIFTVANS CAN BE LOST IN PORT
IT IS CONCEIVABLE THAT SEA POUCHES COULD SUFFER SIMILAR

FATE.

7. IN VIEW OF THE ABOVE, IT IS REQUESTED THAT
SHIPMENT OF SEA POUCHES FOR DAMASCUS BY WAY
OF SYRIAN PORTS BE DISCONTINUED UNTIL THE
POUCHES ALREADY SHIPPED BY SEA ARE RECEIVED AND
WE ARE SURE THAT PORT AND PTT AUTHORITIES ARE
ABLE TO HANDLE THEM.

8. ACTION REQUESTED:

1. IN ORDER THAT STAFF MEMBERS MAY RECEIVE
THEIR MAIL IN REASONABLE PERIOD OF TIME, IT IS
REQUESTED THAT PERSONAL PACKAGES AND BULK MAIL
FOR EMBASSY DAMASCUS BE SHIPPED BY AIR-LIFT POUCHES.

2. SINCE NONE OF THE PRESENT EMBASSY STAFF
NOR SARG CUSTOMS AND PTT OFFICIALS HAVE KNOWLEDGE
OF HOW DIPLOMATIC SEA POUCHES SHOULD BE PROCESSED,
EMBASSY WOULD APPRECIATE GUIDANCE ON THIS SUBJECT.
WE ARE SPECIALLY INTERESTED IN KNOWING HOW THE COST
FOR HANDLING POUCHES AT PORTS AND TRANSPORTING THEM
SOME 300 MILES TO DAMASCUS IS TO BE COVERED.

MURPHY

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